



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Health Department and EMTs Urging Proper Use of Child Car Seats



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RUTLAND - Mike Tarbell was one of six certified car seat technicians who inspected 83 cars during the four hours that drivers were directed by Rutland City police on Sept. 21 to pull into a checkpoint along Route 7.

All but two of the car seats were improperly installed, defective, or unused. In some cases, the child was not in a car seat at all, but instead sitting with an adult seatbelt draped over their lap.

Tarbell, deputy chief of Rutland Regional Ambulance, knows the risk of a child who is improperly restrained. A child slouched too far down in the seat with the strap over the stomach instead of the pelvis can suffer internal injuries during a crash.

"Some people are upset about getting pulled over, but their kids left safer than when they arrived," Tarbell said. "Most people are thankful."

The Department's Office of Public Health Preparedness is working with the state's Emergency Medical Technicians and partners in law enforcement and fire safety to advocate and check for correct and safe usage of child car seats.

Injuries are the leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 44, and each year nearly 300 Vermonters die and thousands of others are hospitalized due to injury.

"Preventing injuries is a primary mission of all EMTs, and the vast majority of them are volunteers with close ties to their communities," said Chris Bell, director of Public Health Preparedness. "People pay attention to them because everyone knows they see the tragic result of the misuse of a car seat, and the Health Department wants to support EMTs to protect as many children as we can."

Children should not use seat belts until they are 4 foot 9 inches tall, and state law requires that all children up to age 8 are properly restrained.

Rutland City Police Lt. Kevin Geno advises every parent to get their child's car seat inspected, even if they think it isn't necessary.

"Take the time to see an inspector who knows how it should be installed," Lt. Geno said. "There are still too many car seats bought at a garage sale that are not correctly installed and need to be looked at or replaced," Lt. Geno said.

Key partners who participated in the car seat check in Rutland are the Department of Motor Vehicles, Fletcher Allen Health Care, Rutland Regional Medical Center, Rutland Regional Ambulance, and the Vermont State Police.

For more information on proper use of car seats visit: <http://beseatsmart.com/>

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